

TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION MINUTES – DRAFT
February 25, 2009

Acting Chair Krueger called the Transportation Commission to order at 7:37 p.m.

1. **ROLL CALL** – Roll was called and the following recorded.

Members Present:

John Knox White
Michael Krueger
Robert McFarland
Srikant Subramaniam

Members Absent:

Jane Lee
Kathy Moehring (arrived at 7:40 p.m.)
Eric Schatmeier

Staff Present:

Obaid Khan, Supervising Civil Engineer
Barry Bergman, Transportation Coordinator

2. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

- a. December 10, 2008

Staff Bergman noted that due to lack of a quorum, the December 10, 2008, minutes would be presented at the next meeting.

- b. January 28, 2009

Commissioner Krueger moved approval of the minutes for the January 28, 2009, meeting and minutes as presented. *Commissioner McFarland* seconded the motion. Motion passed 4-0.

3. **AGENDA CHANGES**

Chair Knox White suggested that Item 7A be presented first because of the members of the public in attendance. He suggested that the Draft AC Transit Line 51 item be heard next, and that the Multimodal Thresholds of Significance be heard after that.

4. **COMMISSION COMMUNICATIONS**

Transit Plan Subcommittee

There was no report.

Bicycle Plan Update Task Force

Chair Knox White noted that this group would meet the following week, and that there was nothing to report

Commissioner Moehring arrived at 7:40 p.m.

5. ORAL COMMUNICATIONS – NON-AGENDIZED ITEMS

There were none.

Commissioner Lee and *Commissioner Schatmeier* arrived at approximately 7:45 p.m.

7. NEW BUSINESS

7A. Request of Relocation of the Bus Stop at Santa Clara Avenue and Chestnut Street.

Staff Bergman presented the staff report, and detailed the background and scope of this item. The request to relocate the bus stop was made due to concerns by church representatives that diesel fumes from the buses caused to the church building and the stained glass windows, and that the damage if left unabated would undermine the extensive renovation that the church had undergone recently. The church is listed on the National Historic Register. The church also claimed there was damage to the landscaping and the front stairs by bus riders who waited on the property, and that the bus riders left trash on the church property. AC Transit and the City generally prefer to keep bus stops in pairs for ease of use by the riders, and staff suggested that if it was determined that the stop should be relocated, that both stops should be moved to other locations.

Staff Bergman noted that the first choice was to keep the stop at the same intersection, but to move it to a different location. The presence of driveways made the location across the street unsuitable. The only other feasible location that would comply with the bus stop spacing guidelines supported by the City and AC Transit would be to relocate it to the intersection of Lafayette Street and Santa Clara Avenue, one block away. He noted that staff considered several factors in evaluating whether to recommend the relocation. In addition to the spacing guidelines, they looked at the physical conditions at the two locations, the land uses near the two sites, the presence of stop signs and crosswalks, input from the community and stakeholders, as well as the usage of the current bus stop and the number of pedestrians and bicyclists using the intersection.

Staff Bergman noted that staff contacted AC Transit regarding the impact of the emissions on the church, and were told that since 2002, AC Transit has undergone an extensive upgrade of their buses, resulting in a 97 percent reduction in the buses' particulate emissions. The tailpipes of the buses also pointed away from the building, and that the impact would not be that significant. *Staff Bergman* noted that determining the impact of emissions is a very complex process, but

given the absence of more detailed information from AC Transit, staff used the information available. He displayed the location of the bus stop on the overhead screen. He noted that in comparing the spacing between bus stops at the two alternative locations, they were essentially equivalent with respect to the guidelines.

Staff Bergman noted that several items were in place to assist pedestrians with crossing at the intersection of Santa Clara and Chestnut, including all-way stop signs, a yellow school crosswalk, a crossing guard, and yield to pedestrian signs. At the Lafayette intersection, there were stop controls for Lafayette Street approaching Santa Clara, but the traffic at Santa Clara was not controlled, and marked crosswalks were not present.

Staff Bergman noted that with respect to the adjacent land uses, the westbound stop was directly in front of the church; the eastbound stop was in front of the parking lot and a school associated with the Immanuel Lutheran Church across the street. The alternative location at Lafayette Street was for the eastbound stop near a residential building; the stop for the westbound direction would be near the grass strip in front of a residence. He noted that the existing location was a school crosswalk, and lined up with several other traffic controls along intersections on Chestnut Street. He noted that there were several schools, including St. Joseph's, nearby and that it connected as a pedestrian corridor.

Staff Bergman noted that with respect to bus stop usage, the existing bus stops at Santa Clara and Chestnut were among the most heavily used stops in the City. He noted that the two bus stops combined were used by an average of 419 passengers per day. He noted that AC Transit indicated that they opposed the relocation of the stop because of the pedestrian amenities at the existing stop, and the lack of a crosswalk at the Lafayette intersection. In addition to the request from the church, staff contacted Haight Elementary School, and there were three child care facilities within a block of the location. The principal of the elementary school, as well as several teachers, indicated that they supported relocating the stop and expressed concern about having students crossing at the same location where the bus stop was located. A similar comment was received from one of the child care centers. A comment was received from the Alameda Korean Presbyterian Church supporting the stop at its current location.

Staff agreed with some of the concerns expressed by AC Transit regarding the appropriateness of the bus stop, and supported maintaining it at its current location, primarily because of the stop controls at the intersection so that the buses are required to stop, whether or not there were passengers at the stop. *Staff Bergman* noted that the City was interested in working with the church to minimize the impact of the bus riders on the stop. He noted that upgraded benches were on order by the City, and were expected to come in soon. Both stops were on the priority list for shelters that were approved by the City Council, based on ridership levels. The City has contacted the Alameda Police Department regarding the potential to conduct patrols or other appropriate safety measures. The City preferred to maintain the stop at the existing location, and for City staff to work with the church to mitigate any negative impacts of the bus stop.

Commissioner Schatmeier inquired whether this stop had ever been located anywhere else. *Staff Bergman* replied that he was not aware of any other location.

Commissioner Krueger inquired whether pedestrian activity was part of the criteria for a stop sign warrant. *Staff Bergman* replied that it was one of the factors.

Commissioner Krueger inquired whether the pedestrian activity attributable to the bus were to be added to the totals for Lafayette and Chestnut would put it over the warrant threshold. *Staff Bergman* replied that it would not.

Commissioner Lee inquired whether police had been involved with other bus stops that may have had issues. *Staff Bergman* replied that he was not aware of anything.

Staff Khan noted that Public Works worked very closely with the Alameda Police Department in these issues, and if staff anticipated any vandalism or other security concerns, the police department would send more officers and keep an eye on the area.

Commissioner Lee inquired whether there had been any specific occurrences that required police intervention. *Staff Khan* replied that he was not aware of any instances other than traffic-related issues.

Commissioner Lee inquired whether the number of pedestrian crossings was a factor in determining the location of the bus stop. *Staff Bergman* replied that was one of the factors that influenced the bus stop's location.

Chair Knox White complimented staff on the quality of the report and photos. He inquired whether the City was able to bill appellants for staff's time. *Staff Khan* replied that staff had received City Council's approval for charging a fee if a request was non-safety related, but that this analysis began before the policy was in place.

Open public hearing.

Mark Cunningham noted that the initial intent was to see what could be done to minimize the damage to this National Register historic church, and that one option was moving the bus stop. They had also requested a shelter and a more clearly marked area for the riders to sit, which would relieve the wear and tear on the steps. After hearing staff's report, he understood that moving the bus stop may not be the best idea, and he requested a covered bus stop with seating. He noted that the decrease in the diesel emissions was a good piece of information.

Nancy Hird, President, Alameda Architectural Preservation Society (AAPS), noted that this building was on the National Registry of Historic Places, and that the AAPS supported the preservation of any older building. AAPS met in the Presbyterian Church for the general meetings, and she relayed a story about several boys waiting for the bus that night, bouncing a basketball against the church building.

Phil Sandri noted that he was a daily bus rider who used this bus stop, and complimented staff on the quality of the staff report. He believed the proposed move to Lafayette Street would be a very poor decision from a safety standpoint, and that the Chestnut Street location was key. He noted that the sight lines on Lafayette and Santa Clara were very poor, which he believed would compromise pedestrian safety.

Jean DuPuis appreciated the work that went into the staff report and analysis, as well as the concern for the preservation of the church buildings in Alameda. She believed that relocating the bus stops to the Lafayette intersection would relocate the nuisances experienced at the church site to another historic building, and would like the effects to be mitigated at the original site.

Jim Rankin noted that this was a difficult issue for the City, and that St. Joseph's lets a lot of students out that go down to Chestnut. He noted that if the stops were relocated to the Lafayette intersection, the noise would make it difficult for nearby residents to sleep.

Margaret Harris, Principal, Henry Haight Elementary School, noted that with respect to the views of others, separating the school crosswalk from the bus stop would help eliminate the blind spot for pedestrians and the crossing guard. She believed it would improve safety when the crossing guards were not available, and that it would help eliminate the drop-off and school traffic blockage that occurs when the bus stops. She had seen scary maneuvers by the parents and student pedestrians right before the morning bell rang. She also noted that if the stop were relocated that students would not have to walk amongst adult strangers waiting for the bus.

Rev. Jack Buckley, pastor, First Presbyterian Church, noted that he had observed an evolution of the crosswalk and bus stop arrangement over the past 15 years. He believed they may have been enhanced following some accidents, and became four-way stops, with further enhanced painting and signage. He noted that the church leaves the porch light on until 10 p.m. for the benefit of the riders, and he enjoys talking with riders when he is outside the front door. He noted that the church likes to be a good neighbor. He would like to protect the church as much as possible, and move the stop a block away. He did not want to pass their problems on to their neighbors, and would be willing to live with the decision of the Transportation Commission. He wants the best for the church, the building and their neighbors.

Stephen Richardson noted that he concurred with the staff report, and did not want the burden to be shifted to the neighbors or the nearby historic building. He understood the church's concerns, but did not want to have the diesel fumes near his home. He supported the staff recommendation.

Melissa Murphy noted that she lives right next to the proposed relocated bus stop, and that her bedroom was right above the bus stop. She noted that while she appreciated the concern around historic buildings, she was more concerned about her health.

George Correa spoke in opposition to the relocation of the bus stop, and was concerned that the 40-foot-long bus would impact one of the large trees on the corner of Lafayette and Santa Clara. He was concerned the tree would have to be cut down, at a cost of nearly \$5,000. He added that

articulated buses would not be able to use this stop. He added that staff checked the property at 1835 Santa Clara, where the proposed stop would be located, and added that there was a garage door that had been grown over with trees. If the garage were ever to be cleared and used, the bus stop would impact that driveway.

Close public comment.

Commissioner Schatmeier complimented staff on the thoroughness of its analysis. He noted that a shelter at this location would be a positive addition.

Commissioner Moehring noted that she was married in this church, and loved it. She inquired of Rev. Buckley how he felt about benches and a shelter at the original location. She believed that some thought should be put into the design of a shelter to enhance the beauty of this church.

Rev. Buckley believed that a shelter would be an improvement over the original bench that was open to the air. He noted that it would not provide any shelter to people on a rainy day. He had seen several shelter designs around Alameda, and believed that a shelter that was glass-enclosed and the ability to seat more than three people would be appropriate. He would not like advertising to be placed on the shelter.

Commissioner Lee appreciated the previous comments, and would like Principal Harris' concerns to be addressed. She understood the safety concerns.

Staff Khan noted that staff examined the operational aspects of this intersection, such as signage and signals. He noted that a stop sign at a crosswalk created a better situation for pedestrians.

Chair Knox White thanked Mr. Cunningham and Pastor Buckley for their comments and cooperative participation. He noted that this stop was one of 18 in the City that was identified by the City Council as a priority location for a bus shelter. Regarding the school concerns, he was not aware of the buses being involved in collisions with pedestrians. He was aware of dangerous maneuvers by parents dropping children off at this and other school locations. He would like to see an educational effort aimed towards parent drivers to take more care around pedestrians.

Commissioner Krueger moved to approve the recommendations in the staff report, with a recommendation for immediate placement of a bench and a trash can at the northbound and southbound stops, and a high priority for installation of a shelter compatible with the architecture of the church at the northbound stop. *Commissioner Schatmeier* seconded the motion. Motion passed 7-0.

7B. Review of the Draft AC Transit Line 51 Service and Reliability Report

Staff Bergman summarized the staff report, and detailed the background of this item. He described the extensive work performed by AC Transit on this ongoing review. He noted that extensive bunching of buses had been reported, and AC Transit examined the issue thoroughly. Staff needed to see more information regarding the causes of those delays. He noted that

relatively few recommendations affected Alameda, and that many of the difficulties affected the portions of the line in Oakland and Berkeley. The options for service modifications were a major part of the report, including the possibility of splitting the route into two different routes; possibly having a limited and local service; or the creation of alternating A and B stops.

Cory Lavigne, District Service and Operations Planning Manager, noted that the report contained a robust public outreach process. He noted that they would like the input of the Transportation Commission before commencing the public outreach process. He introduced *Puja Sarna* and *Sean Diest Lorgion* from his office, who wrote the document.

Puja Sarna noted that this route was the source of most of the complaints received by AC Transit.

Sean Diest Lorgion presented a PowerPoint presentation on the overhead screen, and described the route. He noted that Line 51 was one of AC Transit's most important routes, and the most heavily used, with close to 20,000 daily riders, almost 8% of the total district ridership. The service operated virtually around-the-clock, covering 13 miles, with service every 8 minutes during peak hours, every 10 minutes during the midday, and every 20 minutes during the evenings. There were roughly 80 stops per direction, providing great accessibility for the passengers. He noted that it generally operated at 9 mph in the PM peak hours, at a daily average of 12 mph; some segments were 6-8 mph. He noted that there was large variability in running times, and that the buses frequently bunched up. He noted that the goals of the task force were increase travel time of the route, improve service reliability, increase passenger comfort, while retaining riders. He noted that they conducted point checks to calculate running time along the route, and that the variability in running times made it difficult to write a schedule for Line 51.

Puja Sarna noted that with respect to route-wide improvements, AC Transit recommended having signal coordination along major corridors where it didn't already exist. They also suggested moving bus stops to the far side of signalized intersections so the bus would not catch two signal cycles. They recommended queue jump lanes, so the bus could bypass traffic queued up at a traffic signal, at locations such as the Tube entrance. They recommended having protected left-turn phases, such as where the 51 turned left from Webster onto Santa Clara. They also looked at stop removals and stop spacing issues. They recommended maintaining the appropriate parking restrictions at bus stops to allow the bus to enter and exit the bus stop, and to allow easy boarding and alighting from the bus. They recommended keeping bus stops clear of obstructions, such as garbage cans and newspaper racks that should be placed in appropriate places. Passengers will be encouraged to move toward the end of the bus and alight from the back door. They recommended using a prepayment program at three to five major bus stops to streamline boarding.

Ms. Sarna noted that with respect to reliability, one option was to have a dwell point in the middle of the route so the bus can reset a schedule without irritating the passengers. She noted that another option to reduce running time was to implement a "limited" service, which would stop approximately every three bus stops; this would replace a portion of the local service. She noted that the A/B option was two buses that would stop at alternating stops, although both would stop at major stop locations. She noted that the A/B option had the drawback of making

everybody wait longer for the bus. She noted that the report was a draft, and that AC Transit anticipated receiving more comments. She noted that they would also conduct a rider survey, which they would also distribute to transit advocates. A cost-benefit analysis would be conducted once the recommendations were refined.

Open public hearing.

There were no speakers.

Close public hearing.

Commissioner Krueger noted that he rode the 51 regularly, and always wondered what happened at the end of the line with respect to recovery time.

Mr. Diest Lorgion noted that the delays in the run could stem from delays due to factors such as additional time it takes bicyclists and wheelchair passengers to board, and the need for the operator to use the rest room.

Ms. Sarna noted that the operators' contracts state that they are permitted to take a break at the end of the line, even if they were behind schedule. She noted that there had been some improvement in management of break times.

Mr. Lavigne noted that this was an 86-minute route, and that the break times were designed so the operators felt comfortable taking a needed break.

Chair Knox White inquired whether additional recovery time had been proposed to keep the line on schedule.

Mr. Lavigne noted that was an option if they wanted to add recovery time within the route or at the end of the line; the resource expenditures would be the same. He noted that the addition of time or resources would help the situation.

Commissioner Schatmeier inquired about the distinction between signal priority and signal coordination. *Ms. Sarna* noted that signal coordination was what they advocated for, which occurred when a series of signals were hard-wired together to allow cars to pass through the light continuously. Signal priority was a different type of technology that allowed the emitter on the bus to hold the green light for a longer time, usually 10% of the signal length, to allow the bus to travel through.

Staff Khan noted that signal priority and signal coordination went hand in hand. A new signal would be installed at Pacific and Webster, in conjunction with coordination along the whole corridor.

Commissioner Schatmeier noted that page 17 of the report indicated that drivers are instructed "not to pass the leader bus, even to reduce buses operating ahead of schedule, and the buses will continue to be off-schedule until they can reset at the end of the route." He noted that he has been

a daily transit user for most of his life, and had seen drivers on other transit services bargaining with one another regarding who would pull ahead and pick up passengers. He inquired about the reason for AC Transit's policy.

Mr. Diest Lorgion noted that was called "bump and run" where drivers would pass each other to help out. At one time, such strategies were used, but it was determined that some drivers were abusing this, and it was decided not to permit this.

Open public hearing.

Adrienne Longley-Cook expressed concern proposals to have people exit at the rear doors to the bus. She noted that seniors and people with mobility problems felt more comfortable exiting at the front of the bus. She believed that a speed increase was a problem for people with disabilities standing on the bus, and that she almost went through the window of the bus at one time. She noted that a member of the Commission on Disability Issues mentioned that drivers had passed her up because her daughter is in a wheelchair.

Close public hearing.

Chair Knox White thanked staff for the addendum, and noted that 2,800 people on the route (almost 40% of the ridership) got off in Alameda. He inquired whether the alightings could be added to capture a more accurate picture of the route.

Commissioner Moehring expressed concern about the removal of the two stops in Alameda, which did not contribute to the slowdown of the system very much. She noted that the City was trying to encourage people to take public transportation, and she did not believe that was a helpful change. She noted that Alameda really was not a major part of the problem.

Mr. Diest Lorgion understood *Commissioner Moehring's* concern, and noted that every stop removal did save time as a whole. He noted that they were conscious of equity among the participating cities.

Chair Knox White believed that reliability was the major factor that helped riders once they've gotten on the bus. He supported both removals, and that the removal of the stop at Santa Clara and 9th should be discussed because of ridership.

Commissioner Krueger noted that as a bus rider, he believed the Line 51 balance was skewed, and should be moved towards speeding up the bus and making it more reliable, even if that came at the expense of a slightly longer walk.

Commissioner Schatmeier noted that this was the best performing route in the system, and that it was high-frequency, served many different generators, and that it was important to preserve the positive aspects of the route. He did not want the appeal of the route to riders to be lost while making operational improvements, and that there were often tradeoffs in those performance decisions.

Commissioner Lee expressed concern about splitting the routes, and that if it lost time, it may be more or less convenient to change buses if it was reliable.

In response to an inquiry by *Chair Knox White* regarding the process moving forward, *Ms. Sarna* replied that public input was very important, and that workshops were being scheduled in each of the three cities where the 51 operated – Alameda, Berkeley, and Oakland.

Chair Knox White noted that he would like an opportunity to discuss this item in more detail before moving forward. He noted that the least ridden section of the line had the most delays. He did not believe it would be appropriate to identify drivers as the sole sources of the delays, but did not believe it would be appropriate to soft-pedal the issues on this line. He supported removing the stop at Lincoln, and believed there should be a discussion of whether 9th Street makes sense when examining the number of daily riders. He believed the decisions should be based on whether meaningful time would be saved.

Chair Knox White believed the origin/destination study was key, and should be done before there was a discussion of what to do next. He noted that many people he knew who traveled to Berkeley did not take the 51 all the way; he observed many people riding to 12th and Broadway, where they continued via BART. He noted that he had never seen a bus stop before entering an intersection in order to wait for the bus ahead of it to clear the bus stop, and suggested that be re-emphasized in the drivers' training. It was his personal experience that the delays on Broadway between 8th and 11th were due to double parking.

Mr. Diest Lorgion noted that they would consider looking at the larger articulated buses if the line was split.

Chair Knox White did not favor the A/B split service, and did not believe that would serve riders very well. He believed that driver training and management was very important, and cited the example of New York City buses.

No action was taken.

<p><i>Commissioner Schatmeier</i> moved to extend the meeting until 10:30. <i>Commissioner Krueger</i> seconded the motion. Motion passed 7-0.</p>
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Commissioner McFarland and *Commissioner Subramaniam* left the meeting at 10:10 p.m.

6. OLD BUSINESS

6A. Preliminary Proposed Thresholds of Significance and Implementation Policies

Staff Khan presented the staff report, and explained the meaning of the thresholds of significance. Staff would like Dowling to return and provide more information about the analysis. He noted that the issue raised at the last meeting addressed the degradation associated from the tradeoffs resulting from conflict between two modes, impacting the second mode. He

noted that if the thresholds were to be locked, the tradeoff would be possible. He noted that the California Vehicle Code provided considerable leeway for the community to provide feedback if a crosswalk is proposed to be removed. The Vehicle Code requires the local jurisdiction to hold a public hearing; one was recently held regarding the removal of a school crosswalk near Woodstock School, which has closed.

Staff Khan noted that with respect to conflict between thresholds, a major comment received from the Commission addressed the public safety issue. Public safety is usually addressed implicitly in the Thresholds. He discussed the flow of traffic along long segments without reaching LOS F. He noted that Dowling was testing this, and would provide a report on the results. He noted that at the last meeting, it was requested that pedestrians and bicycles be given preference over transit. After talking with AC Transit and looking at the issues in the field, staff believed that transit should be given the priority because it would ultimately yield better conditions for pedestrians and bicyclists.

Chair Knox White believed that the City should be very clear about what's happening with respect to disclosure, and that it was difficult to understand the procedures for resolving conflicts between preferred modes as presented in the staff report. He asked to see the policies used by staff to develop the procedures.

Commissioner Krueger noted that he also had trouble with the information presented in the staff report. He inquired whether an algorithm was used to come up with this list.

Staff Khan noted that the list of streets was based on a Citywide model that stated that certain intersections would go to D or E, and that pedestrians, bikes and transit had the priority on those streets. Staff looked at the conflicts that would potentially occur in the future and also based its recommendations on the input from the Commission that the Street Functional Classification System should be followed.

Chair Knox White asked for a sense of the Commission, and asked whether the Commission understood this well enough to discuss it in March.

Staff Khan noted that with "regional arterials with commercial, main or school recreational land use designation, preference will be given to transit mode, followed by the pedestrian mode if the transit LOS degraded below D."

Chair Knox White inquired how the priority was decided.

Staff Khan noted that staff identified the places where transit was critical, and that maintaining a good transit service was important.

Commissioner Schatmeier believed that the need for this was created by automobiles. He commented at the last meeting that there were transit vehicles that ran down transit malls with 15-minute headways; when the trains go by, the pedestrians get out of the way until the next train comes.

Open public hearing.

Nathan Landau of AC Transit noted that there was not an unmanageable conflict with anything besides cars, unless the right of way becomes constricted. He noted that when there was one lane in each direction, a center turn and bike lanes, the bus would become very vulnerable to any disruption in that single lane. He added that they would look for solutions that did not harm either side.

Close public hearing.

Staff Khan noted that developers would like to know what kind of impacts their projects might create when proposing a project in the city.

Chair Knox White would like this policy and the priorities to be spelled out in a clear, simple manner.

Commissioner Schatmeier noted that LOS for transit has not yet been defined, and was glad that staff will continue to look into it.

No action was taken.

8. STAFF COMMUNICATIONS

Estuary Crossing/Feasibility Study

Staff Khan noted that staff planned to release this study next month, and will be brought to the Transportation Commission in March.

Broadway/Jackson Update

Staff Khan noted that there was nothing new to report.

Upcoming development-related traffic studies and plans

Staff Khan understood that Boatworks Development was moving forward, and were in the EIR process. Staff would bring information to the Transportation Commission as it becomes available.

Staff Khan noted that staff was deeply involved in the I-880 and 23rd/29th interchanges. CMA was moving forward with the proposal to eliminate northbound access on 23rd Avenue. He described the proposed redirection of traffic. Staff was concerned about a proposed new signal before the ramp meter, which would create more delays for traffic leaving Alameda.

Chair Knox White inquired why that extra signal would be installed. *Staff Khan* replied that they wanted to combine the two ramps from Oakland and Alameda into one ramp, which was Caltrans' preference.

9. ADJOURNMENT: 11:02 p.m.